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Journeying with Job. Part 19

God’s Strange Math

Text: Job 42:1-17

As the chapter opens, Job acknowledges God’s omnipotence (2). In this acknowledgement, Job articulates the lesson that will later be learned by Nebuchadnezzar, who said, in Daniel 4:35,

*He does according to His will in the army of heaven*

*And among the inhabitants of the earth.*

*No one can restrain His hand*

*Or say to Him, “What have You done?”*

Job confesses that he has been guilty of speaking of God in a vacuum. Job repeats the question God asked in 38:2 and answers it, in 42:3a. Twice before (38:3; 40:7) God has said He would question Job. Now, Job answers God. His answer has to do with the difference between knowing *about* God and *knowing* God! (5)

Job spoke *about* God, without knowledge *of* God (5-6).

Perhaps there is someone here today who knows lots *about* God. Maybe this will be the day you decide to begin a journey of *knowing* God himself.

This revelation drives Job to a posture of repentance. (6)

**Three actions**

After God spoke to Job, God addressed Eliphaz. God condemns Job’s friends... and commends Job. (7-8)

1.Condemnation

Job’s friends are condemned for bad theology. These three friends misrepresented God. They portrayed God in a way that was not accurate. The condemnation is repeated at the end of verse 8.

2. Commendation

Job is commended for good theology, that is, for speaking rightly about God.

3.Restoration

Job’s restoration seemed tied to his ministry to his friends. As long as I have been familiar with this book, I had completely forgotten this detail. Look at verses 8b and 10. Job prayed for his friends, *As* or *when* he prayed, Job’s losses were restored.

Job didn’t get a little compensation package. No, he received from God, twice what he lost (except children). Compare 1:3 with 42:12;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Before suffering | After suffering |
| 7,000 sheep (1:3) | 14,000 sheep (42:12) |
| 3,000 camels. (1:3) | 6,000 camels (42:12) |
| 500 yokes of oxen. (1:3) | 1,000 yokes of oxen (42:12) |
| 500 female donkeys. (1:3) | 1,000 female donkeys (42:12) |
| Large household (1:3) |  |
| 7 sons, 3 daughters (1:2) | 7 sons, 3 daughters (42:13) |

After his restoration, Job lived another 140 years AND got to see his inheritance, his progeny.

So, Job died (17). After the drama, the hardship, the inconvenience, the questioning of both self and God, we die. How sobering.

I would think the operant mathematical concept here would *subtraction*. I would think Job would have *less* strength, *less* passion for life, *less* curiosity about the ways of God. I would think his life would, at its end, be described as a series of losses or subtractions. But no. Job *gains*. What strange math. Job has twice as much at the end as at the beginning. He is given more children. His days are full. A close friend of mine, who is also a preacher, preached this chapter of the book and called the sermon “Double for Your Trouble”. I would expect to read of *division* at the end of the book. Divided loyalties. I would even understand *multiplication* coming into play here. Sorrows multiplied. Troubles multiplied. But no. Only addition. God does strange math. When Joseph looked back over his troubles in Genesis 50, he articulated God’s strange math. The many things that happened to him could have been seen as subtractions, losses. Joseph speaks to his not-nice brothers who have inflicted losses on Joseph. Joseph says to them “You meant evil against me” (loss) but God meant it for good” (addition). Joseph goes on to say that “people who would have been dead, are now alive because of God’s strange math in my life.” (Genesis 50:20). Even when Job’s life ended, we see God’s strange math at work. Job lived 140 years, which is double the expected life span of three score and ten (70 years- Psalm 90:10). We don’t know if he lived 140 total or if he lived 140 more years. In either case we see the doubling of three score and ten.

**Illus.**

A miserable looking woman recognized British Baptist pastor and evangelist F.B. Meyer (1847-1929) on the train. The woman ventured to share her burden with him. For years she had cared for a crippled daughter who brought great joy to her life. She made tea for her each morning, then left for work, knowing that in the evening the daughter would be there when she arrived home.

But the daughter had died, and the grieving mother was alone and miserable. Home was not "home" anymore. Meyer gave her wise counsel. "When you get home, and put the key in the door," he said, "say aloud, 'Jesus, I know You are here!' and be ready to greet Him directly when you open the door. And as you light the fire tell Him what has happened during the day; if anybody has been kind, tell Him; if anybody has been unkind, tell Him, just as you would have told your daughter. At night stretch out your hand in the darkness and say, 'Jesus, I know You are here!'"

Some months later, Meyer was back in that neighborhood and met the woman again, but he did not recognize her. Her face radiated joy instead of announcing misery. "I did as you told me," she said, "and it has made all the difference in my life, and now I feel I know Him." (From [sermonillustrations.com](http://sermonillustrations.com), under “Loss”)

Beloved, I know some of you are going through some of the darkest days in your lives. While God is working out His strange math in your life, say to yourself over and over, “God, I know you are here. God, I know you are here.”

Amen